

WHY CRIME DOES NOT PAY—

Sophie Lyons—the "Queen of the Burglars"

No. 7 of the Series of Extraordinary Revelations

Written by SOPHIE LYONS

The Most Famous and Successful Criminal of Modern Times, Who Made Million Dollars in Her Early Criminal Career and Lost It at Monte Carlo, and Has Now Accumulated Half a Million Dollars in Honorable Business Enterprise



Written by Sophie Lyons.

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If there is any one familiar adage that fits every criminal in the Underworld it is "Easy come, easy go." Surely there is a curse on stolen money. More than once in my former life I have received \$50,000 as my share in a Sunday morning bank burglary—and by the next Saturday night not even a five-dollar bill remained.

Professional thieves are rich one day and poor the next. The fact that more money is always to be had without the hard labor which brings honest reward makes thieves as improvident as children. All thieves are gamblers—scarcely in all my acquaintances can I recall even one exception. Sometimes the entire proceeds of a robbery are lost in a gambling house within twenty-four hours after the crime.

And this is how it has come about that all over the world in every big city there are "backers" of thieves; men, and sometimes women, who take the stolen goods off their hands, find hiding places for criminals who are being pursued, advance money to them when they are out of funds and even pay the expenses of their families when the burglars get into prison. Some of these friends of thieves are really promoters of criminal enterprises. They name the banks and jewelry shops that are to be robbed and select the residences of wealthy persons that are to be entered. They are like the backers of theatrical enterprises who put up the money for the necessary expenses and advance the salaries of the actors; they are like the promoters in the mining world who pay for the tools, the pack animals and who "grub-stake" the miners to outfit them on prospecting tours in the mountains.

Queen of the Thieves

Curiously enough the greatest crime promoter of modern times was a New York woman, "Mother" Mandelbaum. Alas! I knew her well too well. A hundred, yes, perhaps nearer five hundred transactions I have had with her, little and big. Many were entirely on my own account, oftentimes I dealt with her in behalf of thieves who were in hiding or in need of help or were in jail.

Nobody anywhere did such a wholesale business in stolen goods or had such valuable associations among big criminals. "Mother" Mandelbaum, of course, cracked no safes, she did not risk her skin in house burglaries, her fat hand was never caught in anybody's pocket, no policeman's bullet was ever sent after her feeing figure. Here, then, we have a dealer in crime pretty shrewdly protected from the dangers that beset criminals. And yet I shall once again prove to my readers and from this very woman who was the uncrowned "Queen of the Thieves," rich, powerful and protected by the police—from this very "Mother" Mandelbaum I shall again show that CRIME DOES NOT PAY!

But was this woman exceptionally unlucky? No. I will recount to you also the career of John D. Grady, her very remarkable rival in the same field of criminal promotion—the man who financed the great \$3,000,000 Manhattan Bank robbery and had the famous Jimmy Hope and his band of expert cracksmen in his employ. From Grady I will also prove the great moral truth that surely CRIME DOES NOT PAY!

"Mother" Mandelbaum's real name was Mrs. William Mandelbaum. She was born in Germany of poor but respectable parentage. As a young woman she arrived in America without a friend or relative. But her coarse, heavy features, powerful physique and penetrating eye were sufficient protection and chaperone for anyone. It is not likely that anyone ever forced unwelcome attentions on this particular immigrant.

Arrived in New York she was compelled to pawn one or two gold trinkets while looking for work. This brought her in touch with the flourishing pawnshop business.

Encouraging Pickpockets

The pawn shops were practically unregulated by law in those days and the German girl's painful experience as a customer, instead of making her angry, impressed her with great admiration. There was a field for an ambitious person and if ambition is a virtue none was ever more virtuous in that particular than "Mother." But how to enter this profitable industry was the question. To be a pawnbroker has always required capital. That is, it always has for anyone but this woman, who had none. She made a hurried survey of the pawn shops along the Bowery and elsewhere, and among others noticed the place of one William Mandelbaum.

William was unmarried, rather weak willed for a man of his calling, lazy and afflicted with chronic dyspepsia. He cooked his own meals over a kerosene lamp, which was undoubtedly the cause of his indigestion. "Mother" Mandelbaum introduced herself as Fredericka Goldberg, and offered to cook and tend store at nominal wages.

The "nominal wages" item secured her the position and the cooking made her firm in it. Within a week, William's digestion was better than he could ever remember since boyhood; he had gained seven pounds in weight and business was growing beautifully—all on account of the capable Fredericka.

At the end of the week, William and Fredericka had a business talk; Fredericka didn't want an increase in wages. She didn't want any wages at all. It was partnership or nothing. William ate one meal cooked by himself and then surrendered. Within a few weeks they were married. Mrs. Mandelbaum forced afterward was the head of the house of Mandelbaum.

Among her customers Mrs. Mandelbaum noticed an occasional one who would hurry in and get what he could on a miscellany of watches and small pieces of jewelry. These hasty, furtive young men and boys took what they could get and showed little disposition to haggle. As they never returned to redeem their pledges.

The new head of the house encouraged these customers, who were, of course, pickpockets. At first, through ignorance, and later as a matter of policy, Mrs. Mandelbaum was more liberal in her terms than was customary. Some pawnbrokers would not accept anything from a pickpocket if they knew it. The others took advantage of the pickpocket's peril of the law to drive the hardest possible terms.

It was not long before Mandelbaum's had the lion's share of the pick-pocket business. One who disposes of stolen goods is known as a "fence," and Mrs. Mandelbaum soon became one of the most important "fences" for pickpockets in the city.

As the pawnshop grew more and more notorious, the weight of the police grew heavier and heavier on the proprietress. She dealt less liberally with pickpockets than before. She squeezed them to the last notch, but they still remained her customers for she was no harder than the other fences.

In order to meet the ever increasing blackmail of the police, Mrs. Mandelbaum found it necessary to steadily enlarge her business. Carefully she developed a system for scattering her stock so that her New York headquarters never contained a very large stock of stolen goods. She kept men busy melting down gold and sil-

ver and disguising jewelry and others ferreting out supposedly honest merchants who were willing to buy her wares and ask no questions.

It must always be borne in mind in these articles that crime cannot be carried on by individuals. It requires an elaborate permanent organization. While the individual operators, from pickpockets to bank burglars, come and go, working from coast to coast, they must be affiliated with some permanent substantial person who is in touch with the police. Such a permanent head was "Mother" Mandelbaum.

The field of usefulness to thieves of the big "fences" like "Mother" Mandelbaum and Grady are infinite. Suppose you are a burglar and last night's labors resulted mostly in jewelry and silverware, you would have neither the time nor the plant to melt down the silver and disguise or unset the stones. "Mother" Mandelbaum would attend to all that for you on about a 75 per cent commission.

This wonderful woman kept certain persons busy on salary melting down silver. Others worked steadily altering, unsetting and otherwise disguising jewelry.

What would you do with a stolen watch which bore, deeply engraved on the back, the name and address of its rightful owner? You might melt down the case and get a little something for the works, but "Mother" would do better. She would turn it over to one of her engravers who would rapidly and not inartistically engrave a little scene or decoration on the watch case, completely masking the name and address.

A stolen automobile is the worst kind of a "white elephant" on your hands unless you know where to take it. Every city has its plants where a stolen car is quickly made over, usually into a taxicab, and so well disguised that its former owner may pay for a ride in it without suspicion.

The force of artisans and mechanics employed on the fruits of burglary and pocket picking is several thousand in a city the size of New York or Chicago.

All burglars and thieves are busy with their own enterprises, and have no time to look after all these matters. Somebody there must be who will organize these first aids to the captured criminals—the "squadders of squadders," the lawyers, the men to provide bail, etc. Such a one with "Mother" Mandelbaum.

Hacks, taxicabs, express wagons and even moving vans must be readily available. Peddlers are extremely useful. They prowl about wherever they please and act as advance men for the burglars. Keeping peddlers and tramps off your premises is one of the best forms of burglar insurance.

The army of enemies of society must have its general, and I believe that probably the greatest of them all was "Mother" Mandelbaum.

Robbing Tiffany

Of all the stolen things brought into her shop, Mrs. Mandelbaum preferred diamonds. She rapidly became an expert on stones and they presented few difficulties.

A stone once outside its setting usually bears no "earmarks" by which it can be identified. Nothing is so easily hidden nor so imperishable as a diamond, and, as everyone knows, they have an unfailing market. She exhorted her pickpocket customers to specialize on stickpins, and doubtless they did their best to please her.

While pickpockets are "pickers," they cannot always be choosers, and the percentage of diamonds remained disappointingly low. This interest in diamonds brought the "fence" to visit Tiffany's several times. She stole nothing, in fact, I am sure "Mother" never stole anything in her life. But it cost her nothing to examine and admire the beautiful stones, and during one of her visits she was struck with an ingenious idea which marked the second step in her career. She planned a robbery.

In the rear of the Mandelbaum store a consultation was held between the proprietress, a confidence man known as "Swell" Robinson and a shoplifter, by the name of Mary Wallenstein.

Robinson, as his name would indicate, was a man of good clothes and presence. He walked into Tiffany's, went to the diamond counter and spent a long time examining the big stones. After about twenty minutes of questioning he was unable to make up his mind and decided to think the matter over and return later.

One of the stones valued at about \$8,000 was missing, and the clerk very apologetically asked Robinson to wait a moment while he searched for it. A dozen employees hunted and counted the stones while Robinson grew more and more indignant at the evident suspicion that he had taken the stone.

At last things came to a head and Robinson was led to a room and searched. Nothing was found and the store, knowing they had been somehow robbed, were had not quite down when Mary appeared.

She went to the same counter and stood exactly where Robinson had been. She examined one of the small diamonds and, like Robinson, she concluded to go home and think it over. There was no objection

made, for there was nothing missing this time. An hour later she handed the \$8,000 gem to "Mother" Mandelbaum.

The following morning the man who polished the counters at Tiffany's found a piece of chewing gum wedged underneath the counter where nobody would see it. Inspection of the gum revealed the impression of the facets of a diamond of the general size of the missing stone. Then everyone understood. The man had placed the gum beneath the counter when he came in. At his first opportunity he stuck the diamond in it. The girl coming in later had only to feel along the counter and remove the gem to make the theft complete.

This first robbery planned by "Mother" Mandelbaum was so delightfully successful that the pickpocket industry seemed slow by comparison. The chewing-gum trick could not be worked again, because the jeweler's association had notified all its members of the new scheme. It was a short step from jewel-stealing to sneak-thief operations in banks. Sneak thieves and confidence men began to frequent the back rooms of the Mandelbaum establishment. It became a clearing house for crimes of larceny—big and small.

Many able and successful burglars are unimaginative, and, left to their own devices, would never discover anything to rob. These earnest but unimaginative souls hung about the premises as if it were an employment agency waiting for the "boss" to find a job suited to their particular talents.

Dry Goods Store Thieves

On the other hand, timid but shrewd and observant persons frequently saw chances to steal which they dared not undertake. Servants of wealthy New York families learned that "Mother" Mandelbaum paid well for tips and plans of houses.

Next came employees of wholesale and retail dry goods houses.

To handle bales of silk and woolen, furs, blankets and other bulky but valuable merchandise presented new problems. To meet these Mrs. Mandelbaum moved her establishment to larger quarters. She retained the pawnbroking department, but added a miscellaneous store, in which she carried for sale most of the articles found in a country store.

She was now the mother of three children, two daughters and a son—Julius. One of the daughters married a Twelfth Ward Tammany politician. This political alliance was extremely valuable. It made the police more moderate in their extortion for immunity, and was the means of obtaining pardons, light sentences and general miscarriage of justice on the part of judges.

I shall never forget the atmosphere of "Mother" Mandelbaum's place on the corner of Clinton and Rivington streets. In the front was the general store, innocent enough in appearance; and, in fact, the stock of goods were only part stolen, and these of such a character that they could not possibly be identified.

"Mother" Mandelbaum led a life which left her open to many dangers from many different directions. Every member of the underworld knew that stolen goods of great value were constantly coming into her resort and from time to time schemes were devised to plunder the famous old "fence."

Mrs. Mandelbaum always sat inside of a window which was protected by strong steel slats. The door to the room was of heavy oak. It was impossible, thus protected, for anybody to make a sudden rush and catch "Mother" Mandelbaum off her guard.

But, realizing that thieves might at any moment raid her establishment and finally force their way into her den, she provided still another safeguard.

The Secret of the Chimney

"Mother" Mandelbaum had a special chimney built in her den, where she kept a little wood fire burning during the winter and kept the fireplace filled with old trash during the hot season. This chimney was peculiarly constructed, and had a false back behind the fire, and in this cavity was hidden a little dumb-waiter. In front of the dumb-waiter was a false iron chimney back on a hinge that could be let down. She constructed a special brick wall so that it appeared to be the regular wall of the house.

In case of sudden emergency, "Mother" Mandelbaum could gather up any diamonds or stolen goods which might be incriminating, pull down the false chimney back, which fell down over the fire, stow away the tollable valuable in the hidden dumb-waiter, push the dumb-waiter up out of sight into the chimney and push back into place the false chimney back. This simple operation concluded, "Mother" Mandelbaum was then ready to face a search or a holdup.

If ever anybody lived in the proverbial "glass house," surely it was "Mother" Mandelbaum—and she knew it. Her establishment was ostensibly a general store and a pawnbroker's office, which she maintained in the front room, but Mrs. Mandelbaum also dealt in stolen goods of all kinds and planned robberies with thieves and often sheltered, protected and hid thieves in times of trouble.

"Mother" Mandelbaum was never seen in the front room, where a clerk was always kept on guard. She kept out of reach in an inside room, behind the window with the steel grating. Her false chimney and secret dumb-waiter arrangement, as already explained, was in this room. In another room "Mother" Mandelbaum kept two or three employees busy removing stolen jewels from their settings and engraving designs to cover up and hide monograms and identification marks from watches, jewelry and silverware.

"Mother's" Glass House

In an adjoining room were kept bulky articles and stolen goods, such as fur coats, etc. Here, too, the price tags, factory numbers and other marks were always removed from stolen furs, laces and silks. One of the back rooms contained beds where thieves were lodged when occasion demanded. Still another room was a store room where crates and cases of stolen goods were packed up for shipment to her customers. At the end of the passageway leading to one of the rooms was a secret trap door. In case of a raid by the police and if her front and back doors were guarded by detectives, she could use the trap door to let thieves escape down through a hole in the basement wall which led up into the house next door, which "Mother" Mandelbaum also owned under another name.

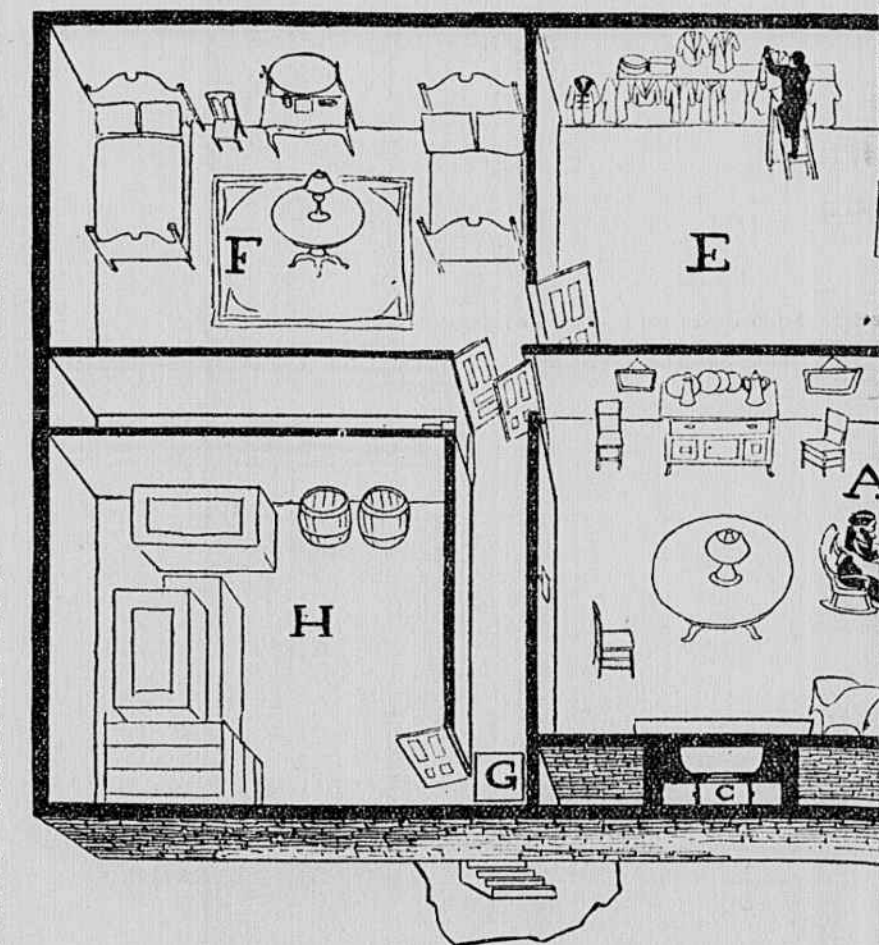
Gradually "Mother" Mandelbaum's clientele of crooks increased in number and importance until she had only one real rival, John D. Grady, known as "Old Supers and Slings."

Grady had a more distinguished body of bank burglars under his sway than had "Mother." Bank burglars are the aristocrats of the underworld, just as pickpockets are the lowest.

When the Manhattan Bank robbery was planned and executed "Mother" Mandelbaum was much humiliated that she could not command the financing and planning of the splendid project. It was Grady's funds which financed the undertaking, and poor "Mother" lost her one pet and star, "Western George" Howard. Howard in many ways was the greatest of bank burglars and he was rated by many as superior to Grady's Jimmy Hope. Last week I told you how "Western George" made the Manhattan Bank robbery possible and then was murdered.

After Grady's tragic death "Mother" Mandelbaum was the undisputed financier, guide, counsellor and friend of crime in New York.

Mrs. Mandelbaum's Special Devices and Secret Trap-Door



If ever anybody lived in the proverbial "glass house," surely it was "Mother" Mandelbaum—and she knew it. Her establishment was ostensibly a general store and a pawnbroker's office, which she maintained in the front room (B), but Mrs. Mandelbaum also dealt in stolen goods of all kinds and planned robberies with thieves, and often sheltered, protected and hid thieves in times of trouble.

"Mother" Mandelbaum was never seen in the front room (B), where a clerk was always kept on guard. She kept out of reach behind the window with the steel grating (A). Her false chimney and secret dumb-waiter arrangement was at the point (C). In the room (D) "Mother" Mandelbaum kept two or three employees busy removing stolen jewels from their settings and engraving designs to cover up and hide monograms and identi-

fication marks. In the room (E) goods such as fur coats, etc. were kept. In the room (F) stolen furs, laces and silks were kept. In the room (G) beds were lodged when occasion demanded. In the room (H) crates and cases of stolen goods were packed up for shipment to her customers. At the end of the passageway leading to one of the rooms was a secret trap door. In case of a raid by the police and if her front and back doors were guarded by detectives, she could use the trap door to let thieves escape down through a hole in the basement wall which led up into the house next door, which "Mother" Mandelbaum also owned under another name.

The Tragic End of



Grady, the "Fence," had every arrangement to elope with her. She was trying to poison him. "So it's murder you were doing!"

She saw death in his eyes. He would first have his way. Strength of despair, twisted sleeve in his hand.

Still there could be no he poised himself to plunge, seized him and he sank slotted out of the door. Grady was dead; heart moment.

For twenty-five years she lived proceeds of other people's crimes. That time she made many millions these millions slipping away for part in bribing, flinging and silencing. Still she was a very wealthy, old woman when the blow fell. Mrs. Mandelbaum, had a serious fever. This row was the beginning of her end.

Soon after Mary was arrested, course, applied for help from the